जानना चाहती हूँ कि इन्होंने अपने मूल प्रश्न के उत्तर में बताया कि इन नदियों पर नेपाल सरकार से मिलकर के बांध बनाने की प्रक्रिया शुरू की है। इसके अलावा क्या आपने इन नदियों का, जिनकी गाद भर जाने के कारण इनकी मूल धारा भटक करके आगे नई-नई धाराएं हर साल अख्तियार करती हैं और उन नई धाराओं में बाढ़ आ जाने के कारण हर साल कुछ नये-नये गांव उसकी चपेट में चले आते हैं तो क्या उन नदियों की गाद निकालने की किसी परियोजना पर भी आप विचार कर रहे हैं और अगर ऐसी परियोजना पर विचार कर रहे हैं तो उस पर कार्रवाई कब से शुरू होगी?

श्री सभापति: ठीक है, माननीय मंत्री जी इसका ध्यान रखेंगे। नैक्स्ट क्वैश्चन।

*29. [*The questioner (Shri Ramarjun Reddy) was absent. For answer vide Pages 31-32.*]

*30. [*The questioner (Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad) was absent. For answer vide Pages 32-33.*]

*31. [*The questioners (Shrimati Vanga Geetha and Shri Ravula Chandra Sekarreddy) were absent. For answer vide Pages 34—38.*]

*32. [*The questioner (Shri Raj Kumar Dhoot) was absent. For answer vide Pages 39.*]

Debt relief package

*33. SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the recent announcement by Government of debt relief package to the farmers will help the distressed farming community;

(b) whether Government are strengthening rural credit banks to implement the debt relief package to the farmers; and

(c) if so, how will it be implemented?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (c) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) to (c) The announcement on agricultural credit made by the Government on 18th June, 2004 envisages the following relief measures:

(i) Debt restructuring/reschedulement and fresh loans for distressed farmers.

(ii) One Time Settlement (OTS) for small and marginal farmers.

(iii) Fresh credit to farmers whose earlier debts have been settled through compromise or write off.

(iv) Loans for farmers indebted to non-institutional lenders.

To enable Rural Co-operative Credit Institutions, NABARD will enhance its refinance support for them. Co-operative Credit Institutions and RRBs are also expected to deploy their own resources for enhancing credit flow.

RBI and NABARD have already issued guidelines on 24.6.2004 and 29.6.2004 to Commercial Banks and Rural Co-operatives and RRBs respectively to provide relief to farmers as per the announcement. In addition, State Governments have been requested to collaborate in this effort and undertake regular reviews. Similarly, CMDs of Public Sector Banks have been advised to closely monitor the progress of this package and ensure field visits by the concerned executives for effective implementation.

The relief measures envisaged and the proposed enhancement in refinance support by NABARD are expected to benefit the farming community.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I am grateful to the hon. Prime Minister and the Finance Minister for having announced the package for the distressed farmers. In the southern States of our country, a lot of farmers have committed suicide due to debt burden. Due to the prevailing drought conditions in those States, the farmers had lost their crops and they had no other way except to commit suicide. Those farmers committed suicide because they were over-burdened with debt and the money-lenders were squeezing them. The State Governments, with their limited resources, were unable to help the farming community. Therefore, the Central Government came in a big way in announcing the package by re-scheduling loans and...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please put the question straightway; otherwise, you will not get the answer.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Sir, I would like to tell the hon. Minister about the practical problem in implementing the package.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Don't tell him. You put the question to him.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Sir, I am putting this question to the hon. Minister with the experience I have gained over the years. Sir, the rural artisans and the people who are involved in agro-business in the villages are given loans by the commercial banks and also by the rural

credit banks for uplifting their conditions. The State Governments select the beneficiary and recommend it to the banks for the purpose of giving them loan. When these people reach the bank, the bank officials say, 'Our target is over, and you cannot get the loan'. After spending a lot of money in applying for the loan and then attending the interview, when they go to the bank, the bank officials say, 'We don't have funds to give them loan'. Therefore, Sir, a lot of people come to the public representatives. The farming community and the rural people who get their income out of it, they lose that income. There is another problem.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It means, you don't want the reply from the Minister.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Sir, I am on this issue only.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Then, please sit down and let the Minister reply.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Sir, I have not put the question so far, Sir, when a farmer applies for loan to the bank during the sowing season, he gets the loan at the time of harvest. These are the practical problems, and I am sure that the hon. Minister is also aware of it.

Sir, what I would like to know from the hon. Minister is this. The hon. Minister has mentioned about the monitoring authority, officials and the State machinery. The State Government calls the meeting once in a year, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether he would call for a review meeting at the district level under the chairmanship of a Member of Parliament or any other authority he deems fit, once in three months to monitor the actual progress of this scheme.

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: Sir, as I said a little while earlier, the Government is acutely conscious of the need to increase the flow of agricultural credit, and that is why we made this major policy statement on the 18th June. The hon. Member asked me whether I am confident that our goals will be achieved. Yes, I am confident that our goals will be achieved. But this requires a sustained monitoring at all levels-at the level of the RBI, at the level of NABARD, at the level of the Central Government.

At the State-level, I have written to all the Chief Ministers to call a meeting of the State-level Committee. Many Chief Ministers have called or are calling these meetings. At the district-level, there is a district level Committee. It is chaired by the District Collecter. But I don't know whether Members of Parliament are invited to that meeting. But, surely, that is a good suggestion. I can certainly ensure that when the District Collector calls up the meeting, he invites the Member of Parliament to attend that

meeting. But we must all work together if this major programme announced on June 18th is to be a success.

I intened, within the limits of my capacity and time, to travel throughout the country to see whether this policy is being implemented. I would urge the hon. Member to do that in his State/Union Territory.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I hope, Mr. Narayanasamy, you are satisfied.

SHRI A. VIJAYARAGHAVAN: Sir, because of a sharp fall in the price of coffee, for the last two years consecutively, coffee farmers are facing acute problems. With regard to their debt, so far, no support has been given either from the Coffee Board or from the commercial banks or from the rural cooperative banks. In view of this situation, will the Government consider a special package for the coffee farmers which includes waiving of loans and other benefits for the coffee farmers?

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: Sir, it will not be correct to say that no relief was granted to coffee farmers. The previous Government did announce a package of relief for coffee farmers. That relief, apparently, didn't satisfy the coffee farmers, and they met me to say that they would like, at least, another year's moratorium and a rollover. I have issued instructions that the accumulated interest until 30th June, 2004 should be added to the principal and a moratorium should be granted. I will follow it up and I am confident that the relief that they asked for, if not all, will be granted partially.

Sir, as regards the waiver, let me submit with great respect, as a rule, waiver is not the answer to relieve indebtedness. But I will keep in mind, what the hon. Member has said while we design a relief package.

Expert Committee on water scarcity

*37 .PROF. ALKA BALRAM KSHATRIYA: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it has been predicted by Safety Health Environment Expert Committee of the Indian Chemical Manufacturing Association that India will face acute water scarcity by 2005.

(b) if so, whether Government have considered the Expert Committee's remarks;

(c) whether per capita availability of fresh water has dropped from 5000 cubic metres per year in 1947 to below 2000 cubic metres in 1997